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Kambara



539 BROWN YOUTHS AND VIRGINS

*Memu wai o nggori ka Kula;*
*Au solia mai loaloa;*
*Au solia na ndrau ni thevunga:*
*Memu wai o nggori ka Kula.*

This is your broth, Sirs the Circumcised;
I give it from the wilderness;
I give the leaf of the *thevunga:*
This is your broth, Sirs the Circumcised.

*Chant used when taking food to youths in isolation after circumcision.*

858 855 Now comes a difficult period for the boy. From the age of about seven until his initiation between eight and thirteen years, his life is uncomfortable. He is ignored, teased, [578] tormented and overworked. He is called by the degrading, humorous, obscene term *pilo* (pronounced pi'-lo), and a *pilo* he is in the eyes of the whole community.

A *pilo* is neither child nor man. He is no longer allowed to play in mixed gangs, and yet he is still excluded from all the interesting masculine activities of his father and older brothers —the preparation of food for the earth oven, sailing, house and canoe building, adult games, and love affairs. His growing masculinity brings about bars that separate him from girls of all ages. Women are inaccessible to him for they bestow their favors upon the initiated. The idea of an affair with a *pilo* is quite ridiculous to them. Yet he is not a man, and he is definitely separated from circumcised youths and older men. He is thwarted and he suffers from feelings of inferiority, becomes self conscious, awkward, silent, and retiring. His plight is highly amusing to the community, especially to the young women and swaggering initiated youths who amuse themselves by ridiculing and spurning him. The only emo- [838] tional outlet for boys of this age is in masturbation or homosexual relationships with other *pilos*. Such relationships are absent among men, according to both male and female informants.

858 857 But a *pilo* is useful. He is no longer a liability to the community, but has become its youngest asset. Chores he learned

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858 to do at an early age now become duties. Work is heaped
857 upon him. He must accompany the men to the gardens, help them with their work, and carry heavy loads of food, firewood, and green leaves back to the village. He is kept busy running errands for his older brothers and cousins. A *pilo,* however, no longer sees the boys of his own age group frequently. He still plays occasionally with his friends in the village or on the beach. He plays the games of childhood—with toy canoes and spears.

Thus the *pilo,* denied association with the youths and men of the village, spurned by the girls, and cut off from boys of his own age, hovers on the margin of social life. His attention is turned upon his growing masculinity, which has gained high value in his eyes, and he longs for the time when he will be initiated into manhood.

881 In Lau the initiation of boys into adulthood centers in the
304 rite of circumcision. According to the natives, the harvest season is best for the ordeal, for inflammation is less likely to occur when everything in nature is dying. Occasionally, however, a youth dies as a result of the operation. The group of initiates gather secretly at the appointed place, usually some distance from the village, and the operation is performed by the village circumciser, a medicine man who has learned the art of circumcising by observation and practise.

881 After all the initiates have been circumcised, they walk to one of the men's houses in the village. They are confined there for four days, under the doctor's care. The doctor instructs them to be quiet, not to fear the dark, and not to think about girls.

On the first day after circumcision the fathers and paternal uncles of the boys prepare a small feast for the doctor. Then the initiation becomes known in the village. The feast is presented to the doctor outside his house and eaten there by him and by the boys' relatives—their fathers, paternal uncles, brothers, mothers, and sisters. A share of the feast is taken to

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881 the initiates. Food is provided daily for the boys by their fathers.

On the fourth day the initiates leave the men's house for the first time since the operation. After bathing in the sea they oil their bodies and dress in new white barkcloth provided by their mothers. It is wrapped around the waist twice, drawn over one shoulder down to the opposite hip, and tied. Meanwhile a large feast has been prepared by their relatives. The feast and a gift of barkcloth and mats, also provided by the relatives, are taken to the doctor's house and presented to him. Then the food is divided and eaten by the whole village. Although the boys may leave the men's house after the fourth day they continue to sleep in it for a month or two.

883 A youth's life changes radically after his initiation. He is accepted immediately as an adult male in the community and as such has all the privileges of a full grown man. He now begins to prepare food for the earth oven, sail on trading expeditions, learn a craft if he is a member of a hereditary carpenter clan, and participate in ceremonies and adult games. Women and girls defer to him and he begins to have secret love affairs with those who are not tabu to him. From a self-conscious inverted *pilo* he rapidly grows into a loud swaggering and aggressive youth, arrogant and condescending to women, and with great interest in the figure he cuts in the village.

● 858 The little Kambaran girl passes through no such difficult adolescent period as her brother. Her childhood is a slow growth toward marriage and child bearing. There is no stage [852] in her development corresponding to that of the *pilo*. For- [304] merly a feast was held to mark her first fishing, at about the age of ten, and she was tattooed at adolescence, but today she grows up gradually and her life is not punctuated by cere- [881] monies or changes of status. Even her first menstruation receives no formal recognition.

ooo When the mixed gang gradually breaks up, the little girl

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When the mixed gang gradually breaks up, the little girl 857
turns to the company of the women and girls of her clan. She 868
begins to take part in their economic activities, which center in and around the kitchen house. One of her first duties is to grate the ripe coconut meat in the preparation of coconut cream in which fish and greens are boiled daily. She also accompanies the older girls to the beach, and learns to kill fish by biting their heads, to clean them, and to extract the shellfish from the shells. Occasionally she accompanies older girls to the bush and learns to recognize and collect tender edible greens. All these activities are done in a spirit of play and curiosity as the girl explores and experiments with her world.

The girl likes to be with women, to sit with them, watch 857
them, listen to their gossip, laugh when they laugh, and do 524
what they do. She plays with stones and fruit, makes whistles out of leaves, and learns from the women to make string figures. I did not see any children playing with dolls, but informants say that little girls do occasionally play with a piece of wood wrapped with barkcloth. A little Lauan's dolls are real, for one of her main occupations is to take care of the babies of her clan, especially her younger brothers and sisters.

When the girl reaches the age of ten or eleven her playful 857
activities take on somewhat the character of work, for girls between the ages of twelve and twenty-five do almost all the daily work which falls to the women. Young girls, working in sub-clan, clan, or occasionally larger groups, gather the daily supply of fish or shellfish from the lagoon, and the greens and firewood for the kitchen from the bush. Frequently one hears from afar the harsh rhythmic chants they sing while walking through the jungle. The girls usually prepare the fires in the kitchen houses and boil the food for the evening meal. At this age some girls learn to make mats, and a few learn from their mothers the first steps in the complicated technic of making barkcloth.

Up to the age of eleven or twelve no special attention is paid 858
to the sex life of children except that the speaking tabu is 864

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858 enforced between brothers and sisters and parallel cousins of
864 opposite sex. Apparently many girls as well as boys masturbate,
and young mothers who are nursing babies—and hence
[838] forbidden sexual intercourse—occasionally do so also. According to the girls themselves, homosexual relationships among girls are not rare. These relationships usually begin by imitation of other girls before a girl's first menstruation. Practically all married women on Kambara say they have had such relationships before marriage, but afterwards they discontinued them without difficulty.

882 From the age of eleven, however, girls are usually more or
[585] less guarded by their parents, for virginity at marriage is prized. A girl's virginity is usually tested on her wedding night by her husband's female relatives, and the next morning the results of the test are made public. Fear of ridicule and the anger of her husband's relatives when she marries prevent some girls from accepting lovers before marriage, which usually does not take place until a girl is at least eighteen years old. Moreover, virgins are afraid of being deflorated. They are not sure just how the act is accomplished although they have witnessed sexual intercourse.

836 There is considerable difference in the degree of pre-marital
178 freedom found on the various islands in southern Lau. The most powerful force acting against pre-marital freedom is the virginity test. Although this custom is not observed at every wedding in Lau it is the rule on conservative islands like Fulanga, where standards of morality are relatively strict. The Lauans, however, try to keep the custom secret from western visitors because of fear of disapproval and ridicule. In general, the native emphasis on chastity has tended to break down in relation to the degree of Tongan and western influence. Among the islands visited, the greatest freedom was found on Mothe, which lies at the trade cross-roads for canoe traffic in southern Lau, and which was formerly the point of departure of sailing canoes to Tonga.